

# News 'micropayments' site to launch in US

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The New York Times is among backers of the Netherlands-based startup Blendle, which aims to let newspapers accept micropayments of between 20 and 30 cents for articles—and thus hopefully reach an audience averse to the paywalls popular in the US

Online news startup Blendle, which allows users to make small payments to read individual articles, announced plans Wednesday to launch next year in the United States.

Blendle, a Dutch-based service which has been operating in the

Netherlands and Germany, hopes the "micropayments" model can help struggling [news organizations](#) as an alternative to "paywalls" or digital subscriptions, said co-founder Alexander Kloepping.

While paywalls have become more common in the United States, Kloepping said, "some of the best content is only available behind those paywalls, doesn't go on the Web until days after publication in print newspapers and magazines and is still viewed through an array of intrusive ads."

He said Blendle helps users "find the most interesting stories every day" by "looking specifically at each reader's tastes, along with the tastes of their friends, and by employing editors that hand-pick the best stories from premium sources."

The New York Times and German digital publisher Axel Springer agreed last year to invest in the platform, which Kloepping founded along with another young Dutch journalist, Marten Blanckesteijn.

Blendle signed up major publishers in Germany and the Netherlands, as well as big names like The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and The Economist.

It has over 500,000 users in the two European countries.

Kloepping told AFP that Blendle expects to charge 20 to 30 cents for US newspaper articles and 25 to 40 cents for magazine stories, similar to the rates in Europe. Publishers keep 70 percent of revenue, with Blendle getting the rest.

"People are ready to pay for that but it needs to be easy," he said. "It needs to be done well. It needs good technology. And that's what we're trying to do."

Blendle will initially seek to bring on major national publications and then smaller, regional and local ones.

Blendle frees users of the need to sign up to costly digital subscriptions for each publication. Readers can buy articles with one click, view them without ads and obtain an instant refund if they are not satisfied.

"In an age of ad blockers and paywalls, many publishers are struggling to find out how to monetize their content. Blendle started as a big experiment in Europe, but it's working," said Kloepping.

By simplifying the readers' experience, he said, "We've proven that we can get young people to pay for high-quality journalism."

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